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ABSTRACT

Traditional philosophy and psychology have given greater attention to the cognitive than to the affective side of the human person. A more holistic approach shifts the emphasis to feeling as a guide to value objectivity. Values are apprehended and symbolized before a judgment is made as to their worthwhileness. The symbolizing process, that is, the objectifying of the outside world to the subject, is in the form of language. If objective truth is not ready-made, but is largely a function of the questions one asks, then it is a function not only of logic but also of the imagination and feeling one gives to the questions. It is a function of the language and symbols one chooses to use. It can be said then that the greatest objectivity is found in the highest levels of subjectivity. Of importance here is seeing human development and functioning as multilevel. Higher levels of personal particularly the ability to put oneself in another's place. The language of the world's great moral teachers is poetic, symbolic, and living. The values residing in their authentic subjectivity have been objectified in language--the poetry of their words and the meanings of their lives. This is the process by which all human beings objectify values. (AMH)

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Language, Affect and the Symbolization of Value

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"Morals" and "Values" are popular words today. People from all directions and varying persuasions are claiming that they have a set of values, some of them moral values, that others should adhere to because they are "true" "objective" values, and it is evident to them that if only other people would accept their values, the world would be a happier place; there would be more peace, less crime, more justice or more souls saved. No wonder we are confused; sometimes these "objective" values are in opposition to each other; frequently they come to us clothed in language that is persuasive yet obscure, language that is grossly manipulative, yet subtly elusive. In our grasping for value straws often we seem to get only a handful of water.

The problem of getting hold of a set of objective values, although it is a contemporary problem is not a new problem. Confusion has come not only from the multiplicity of conflicting values but from the very language of values. Language seems to confuse. Yet, as this paper will attempt to point out, language paradoxically, is the source of value objectivity. Feelings run high when we talk of values, especially moral values. Yet, again, paradoxically, it is the very affect-laden quality of the individual's symbolization of value that is the foundation of value objectivity.

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People have looked for objective values as something "out there" outside oneself, existing in an objective order of things, and the predominant philosophy of how to get to this order of things was to let reason be your guide. Not only did reason have the unerring tool of logic, it was, if properly established in the human psyche, capable of controlling that great enemy of pure reason and the source of all subjectivity, emotions. Traditional philosophy which we have inherited from the Greeks has dichotomized intellect and feeling. Psychology has picked up this distinction between cognition and affect and imposed it on our psyche. But the biological fact of the matter is that our human nervous system is not divided into two discrete systems--cognition and affect, intellect and emotion, thinking and feeling. We have one nervous system, yet for our own convenience in understanding what goes on in it we have sometimes talked about it as if it were two separate systems. The dichotomy has so worked into the language of psychology that it seems to be a description of reality. We have assigned roles to these two children locked in the closet. Intellect was given the role of guiding the emotion, controlling feeling, lest it lead us astray in its subjectivity. Psychology has given much greater attention to the cognitive not only because it was supposed to be much closer to "reality," but because it was much easier for a behaviorist to measure and more respectable for a scientist to be concerned with than anything so amorphous as emotions. It is the purpose of this paper to shift this emphasis to what we have called "emotion"--feeling as a guide to value objectivity--and language as its source. Ultimately it is a more holistic approach.

Feelings, emotions, tell us what is worthwhile, and they can be trusted. Language can be the vehicle of value objectivity. A symbol is according to

Lonergan, (1974, p. 220) an "affect-laden image." The heart is what's beyond the understanding, experience and judgment of mind on the level of "is this worthwnile?". "Without feelings this experience, understanding, judgment is paper-thin. The whole mass and momentum of living is in feeling." Symbols are affect-laden because they either evoke an affect or the image itself is evoked by an affect.

Values are apprehended and symbolized before a judgment is made as to their "worthwhileness." This symbolizing process is frequently in the form of language. The apprehension and symbolization of value meanings is based on the process of distanciation--the increasing differentiation of a symbol situation. Person-object distanciation, as Werner and Kaplan (1963) have stated, represents an increasing differentiation and hierarchic integration of the world of objects and the world of self. This is done through symbolic vehicles which objectify the outside world to the subject. This representation reflects both objective and subjective meaning from the addressor's point of view. From the perspective that the symbolizing process gives, the distanciation, figure emerges from ground, self emerges from environment, yet in relationship to environment. It is the discovery of oneself through symbols. That self is in relationship; the proportions, the meanings of those relationships become clear. At one and the same time the self is not only subject but object seen in perspective. At this point the traditional dichotomy between subject and object is transformed. Rather than simply being opposite poles of a continuum, the continuum is in a sense changed from a straight line into a circle with subject and object at the re-convergence of the circle, identified within the self.

Additional light can be thrown on the concept of subject and object in oneself through the symbolizing process of distanciation by looking at Debrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration. Dabrowski has constructed a

theory of human development setting forth five levels of development, involving in the process of movement from level to level the disintegration of functions at the lower level to be replaced by higher level functioning. At the higher levels of functioning a dynamism which Dabrowski called "Subject-object" in oneself is operative. This dynamic force behind human development enhances one's understanding and experience of reality. Above all, it enhances one's perception of self and the world around as being multilevel. One does not see "love" only; one sees levels of love within oneself and the world. One does not see "aggression" as some kind of monolith; one sees levels of aggressiveness not only in the world but in oneself. One does not see "caring" as one simple thing but begins to appreciate the levels of caring, being able to step back from one's own life, judging at what levels of caring one is living, and feeling a self-critical urge to move on to higher levels which a personality ideal holds out. It is the kind of "self-talk language" a person uses when he says: "There I go falling back into my old ways again; there's the old selfishness, the old pride, the old ego-centrism coming back. I really must do better." Like the self directing speech of a three year old who tells himself that this jigsaw puzzle piece doesn't fit and he must try another better one, the adult uses the symbols of language to direct his development. Language provides the distance for viewing subjects and object in oneself.

One quality this distanciation gives is the opportunity to see the identification of self with other. Language bridges the gulf between individuals who see themselves as just so many isolated "islands" by giving the perspective of relationships. If I am "related," then I am "responsible." New values, new moral imperatives begin to emerge. Paradoxically, as I "step back" in distanciation, I come closer in relation. Not only do I begin to look at myself as object, but I begin to perceive and appreciate

more the individuality of others, the other self as subject. A new perspective on values emerges. There is a remarkable convergence here with Lonergan's apprehension and symbolization before a value judgment is made.

But what about the role of affect? Dabrowski's psychological theory of human development and Lonergan's philosophy paint a scenario emphasizing affect in making value judgments. The fear of traditional philosophy has been that if we give a predominant place to emotions in making value judgments we will be led by mere whimsy and sentimentality; rampant subjectivity which seemed to be the outcome of listening to our feelings would lead to utter chaos in the domain of values and morals. Many emotion-based approaches to values have given good reason for this fear with their slogans: "If it feels good, do it!" "Listen to your heart, not your head." "Don't think, just feel!" They are over-simplifications, outcomes of the mind-heart dualisms we talked about earlier, and compensations for the heavy intellectualization of our traditional philosophy.

Dabrowski's theory puts emotions in the forefront, but in equi-potential collaboration with cognitive functioning--a holistic view, more in tune with the make-up of the nervous system. Dabrowski, like Lonergan, does see emotion as pre-eminent in value judgment making since "the whole mass and momentum of living is in feeling." Dabrowski puts the following words into the mouth of a person reaching higher levels of development: "Thinking appears to me to be one-sided; it has lost somewhere its logical certainty. I am more uncertain and more hesitant, yet at the same time, I find myself richer in my thoughts and feelings. Perhaps loss of certainty in thinking and its closer interdependence with feelings are really tied together with a greater complexity and depth of thinking as a way of knowing . . . There was a time when I was sure of the independence of thought. I believed that when one

passes the experiential sphere of emotions to the discursive sphere of thought, then the whole of human life is raised to a higher level. Today I know that these were just speculations based on unfounded presuppositions. Events and experiences in my life, especially when I felt isolated, sad, in mental pain, broken down, convinced me that my intellectual interests underwent fundamental changes. My thinking has lost its clearly delineating boundaries of thinking for its own sake. It became an instrument of something higher, something you could call a synthesis of intuition and ideal. Isolated thinking has lost its appeal for me, but such thinking which is geared to 'higher functions' gives me at times the feeling of reaching to others, to (the) ideal, and maybe to something even higher, like the reality of transcendental experience."

Again a convergence. Here we have an individual saying about his own personal development in terms of Positive Disintegration theory what authors such as Capra and Zukav are saying about the physical sciences: that there is a movement away from the arrogant "certainties" of Newtonian physics with its trust in intellect and exact measurement to a more transcendent "mystical" view of the physical world in which the involvement of the subjective observer is acknowledged.

John Archibald Wheeler, coiner of the "Black Hole" concept educed an interesting metaphor in an interview for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation program, "Quirks and Quarks." He talked about his experience of playing the game "Twenty Questions." Usually the panel in this game has a preconceived idea that the right answer exists in someone else's mind and they must get to it by asking the right, logical questions. Wheeler's friends played a trick on him; they had no preconceived answer when it was his turn to ask

the questions. All they did was answer with consistency the questions he asked and he came to the "right" answer, an answer which was of his own making, a function of the kinds of questions he happened to ask. Reality was not "out there" waiting to be discovered by pure logic; reality was something he "created" by his own imagination, his own self-directed questioning as he put the pieces of the puzzle together for himself. If the original "Twenty Questions" got to an object established by preconception, perhaps his arrival at objectivity can be called a process of "postconception." And perhaps postconception is more where it's at with our understanding of the world. The objective truth is a function largely of the questions we ask, a function of the logic of those questions it is true, but a function of the imaginational and emotional loading we give to those questions. It is a function of the language and symbols we choose to use, and much of that language, much of that symbolization goes beyond the bounds of intellect and resides more in the realm of feeling, taking us into the transcendent which is supra-rational and rich with the symbols of emotion. There is much of the subjective in every "objective" judgment. In fact the greatest objectivity is found in the highest levels of subjectivity.

The last statement was carefully worded; it did not say, "the greatest objectivity is found in the greatest subjectivity" but in the "highest levels" of subjectivity. Seeing human functioning as multilevel is important here. Dabrowski has pointed out that there can be greater differences betweer an emotion at its lowest levels and the same emotion at its highest levels than there are between two emotions going under different names. One cannot talk of "joy" for example, as a kind of monolith; there are levels of joy, ranging all the way from the lower level rejoicing of someone who triumphs cruelly over others, up through the levels of joy felt at the beauty of nature or the

realization of friendship to the highest levels of an all-encompassing love transcending death. Dabrowski has taken many emotions and distinguished within each five levels of development. He talks for example of "sadness," "laughter," "anger," "fear," and clearly distinguishes levels within each of these emotions. One is impressed with the richness added to language when one begins to use these everyday words as multilevel concepts. A principal theme runs through Dabrowski's hierarchy of levels and it has major implications for our theory of valuing. It is that, as the person develops, his values become more complex, more subtle, more numerous in their nuances of meaning and feeling yet always more integrated into a hierarchy that becomes clearer with development to higher levels. The movement is away from egocentrism to autonomy, authenticity and above all empathy. The higher levels of development are levels of clarified relationships with others and with oneself. They are levels in which the distanciation of which we spoke earlier has had full effect. Fineness of feeling characterizes the person as he moves upward to higher levels of development and it is this emotional sensitivity that guides him in establishing a personal hierarchy of values, a hierarchy which clearly delineates to him the way things ought to be. What is and what ought to be become clearly differentiated. Dabrowski's approach to "oughtness" avoids the naturalistic fallacy that has bothered philosophy. It sees oughtness as clearly emerging from the emotional sensitivity of individuals at higher levels of development. And it is the higher levels of the individual's development, the autonomy--freedom from the pressures of the crowd, the authenticity--the inner coherence and integrity, the empathy--the fine feeling for others and the ability to put oneself in another's place that create the objectivity of

of value judgments. Lonergan (1974 p.214) sums it up in one telling sentence: "Objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity." The more highly developed the subjectivity, the greater the objectivity.

Thus far we have been attempting to establish that the source of values (truly "objective" values) is found in affect-laden symbols through which individuals at high levels of development have distanciated themselves from persons and objects around them. These symbols, frequently in the form of language, create a perspective for the eminent individuals which leads them to objectivity.

If the Holy Grail of value objectivity is found in the higher levels of emotional development of a handful of eminent human beings, what is the fate of the rest of us poor mortals still struggling at lower levels?

Whitehead points out that the process of contemplative perception and symbolization are "fallible" particularly in terms of individual differences, as a result of variance in each person's situation as a being-in-the-world. The very process of distanciation creates the danger of error. Two persons may perceive the same object or event in different ways, according to the perspective their position gives them. What one person perceives as love, another may perceive as a condescending pity. Such varying viewpoints which, according to Whitehead is the stuff of creativity is also the source of misunderstanding, argument and even war and mass destruction. Witness how the two sides of the cold war concurrently stockpile aggressive and dehumanizing armaments such as nerve gas. Both do it in the name of "defense," "protection" of their civilian population and ultimately "world peace."

Some sociologists such as Durkheim have placed the source of value objectivity in the consensus of society. Social consensus dictates the norms of behavior. Society is the source of objective values.

Roberts (1981, p. 78ff) points out how the individual can be "engulfed" by his society: "Language is paradoxical. On the one hand it represents the medium for the expression of a person's self as an authentic being-in-the world, while, on the other, it represents the medium for engulfment of the person into the background of social conventionality. That is while man has the power of language to create and re-create his symbolic universe, he is at the same time paradoxically subject to the power of the creations of himself and others expressed through language . . . while man presupposes the world which he creates and re-creates, he is also presupposed by the world which is created and re-created through the language of himself and others in society. How he acts in response to this dilemma created by language paradox is his expression of his personality, the level at which his self emerges as either authentic or conventional."

One who is under the sway of conventionality is not acting authentically; he is not therefore in touch with a core of objective values, "Objectivity is the fruit of <u>authentic</u> subjectivity."

If social consensus is not the source of objectivity, and the lot of great masses of people is to have not reached high levels of authenticity, where is their source of objective values? It is the core of authentic, eminent persons we have talked of earlier, and language is the vehicle between the few and the masses. But, as we have seen, language is a fallible vehicle in conveying meaning. Perhaps it is for that reason that philosophers are so little listened to and even less often understood. They have in their hands the tools of logic and the vehicle of language with which to convey their logic, the fruit of their highly intellectual activity. The fact that they are not listened to is not

the result of the stupidity of the people, but the fact that, for the most part they consult only the head and not the heart, and the language they use is almost exclusively the language of the head.

If we, on the other hand, look at the great teachers of values and morals, those who have had centuries of influence and whose followers number millions, men like Moses, Socrates, Christ, Mohammed, Buddha, we find that their "language" is not only the language of words but of symbols that go beyond words. The teachings of the great teachers and prophets are full of stories, metaphors, parables that have deep concrete meaning in their listeners' lives and are emotion-filled. In our attachment to rationality, we have neglected too the language of the mystics and poets whose emotion-filled language rich in symbolization conveys meanings inexpressible in words, yet, nevertheless real meanings, objective values.

The great moral teachers have "spoken" in symbols beyond language in lives lived, in dedication, responsibility, concern for others, hunger for justice and sometimes the ultimate symbol of giving up their lives for what they teach.

The language of the great moral teachers is powerful because it is living, because it is affect laden, because it is enriched with their perspective. Because these eminent persons are in contact with their world from the perspective of their own authentic subjectivity, they can convey to us in a myriad of rich symbols values that are objective in a language rich with the poetry of words and meanings of lives lived. Value objectivity is not something "out there" to be grasped by logic and reason alone. It is something within us, within, especially those who are most authentic among us. They, from the depths of their subjectivity, speak to us the language of objectivity.

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